

Assemblyman
PAUL KORETZ

Forty-second Assembly District

proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 22, 2004

Contact: Teresa Stark
916-319-2042
916-715-2203 (cell)

Koretz Endorses StopN9condoms.com & L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center
Efforts to End Production of Condoms with Spermicide
Oakland-based Mayer Labs Destroys Remaining Stocks Setting Standard for the Industry

Sacramento – Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood) today lent his support to the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's call to avoid patronage of certain condom manufacturers and he endorsed the launch of www.StopN9condoms.com. The privately funded website is aimed at pressuring the FDA, condom manufacturers, and retail chains to stop the sale of condoms containing the spermicide nonoxynol-9 (N-9).

"Condoms with spermicide made by Trojan, Lifestyles, and Beyond Seven contain a harmful chemical and should be avoided by everyone. I urge individual consumers to stop buying condoms with spermicide and to visit StopN9condoms.com to send messages to the FDA, condom makers, and retailers telling them to stop selling these harmful products. I support the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's call to health agencies around the country to refrain from buying any products from companies that continue to produce N-9 condoms," said Assemblyman Koretz.

At a press conference today in Oakland, David Mayer, President of Mayer Laboratories shredded thousands of N-9 condoms made by his company and demanded his competitors do the same to protect the health of their customers. Mayer Labs makes Kimono and Maxx brand condoms and was the first condom manufacturer to stop selling N-9 condoms back in 2002. Durex Condoms, the world's largest condom maker announced last January that they would also stop production. In February, Connecticut-based CondomDepot.com became the first major condom retailer to refuse to sell condoms with spermicide.

Also speaking at the Oakland press conference was, Dean Goishi from the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center, who called on other health agencies to stop purchasing any products from companies that produce N-9 condoms. Bart Broome, a Legislative Assistant to Mr. Koretz who has worked extensively on the N-9 condom issue, was in Oakland to announce the launch of StopN9condoms.com, a website he is funding with his own money and which was created by volunteer web developers.

Speaking from Sacramento, Koretz said, "I would like to stress that correct and consistent use of condoms without spermicide is very effective against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. However, condoms with N-9 spermicide are a danger to public health and the FDA should act immediately to take them off the market."

Koretz has spearheaded efforts in California to get nonoxynol-9 condoms off store shelves. Last summer after almost a year of quiet negotiation with representatives of the condom industry, Assemblyman Koretz and then Speaker Herb Wesson were infuriated when the manufacturers refused to meet with California legislators, representatives of Governor Davis, and state health officials.

###



STOPN9CONDOMS.COM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 22, 2004

CONTACT: BART BROOME
cell 415-203-7924

Website Targets Manufacturers of Spermicide Condoms ***FDA Fails to Protect Public Health • Grass Roots Efforts See Success***

Oakland, CA – Volunteer AIDS activists have launched a website that allows visitors to send email messages to the FDA, condom manufacturers, and national retailers asking them to stop the sale of condoms with a spermicidal additive known as Nonoxynol-9 (N9). The website, www.StopN9condoms.com, was founded by Bart Broome, a legislative staffer for California Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood), and web developer George Dugan, as well as other volunteers.

“AIDS activists, research scientists, women’s health advocates, and public health officials have been calling on manufacturers to stop N9 condom production for nearly 2 years. Lifestyles, Trojan, and Beyond Seven brand condoms have ignored these calls. Meanwhile, the FDA would rather discredit condoms in the name of abstinence than protect public health,” said Broome at a press conference in Oakland. The website proclaims, “If it says ‘spermicide’ on the box, don’t buy it!”

StopN9condoms.com is being launched just as a global effort to pressure condom manufacturers is gaining steam. There are currently campaigns in Canada and the United Kingdom, as well as in Washington state and Pennsylvania. And their efforts are paying off.

At the press conference today, David Mayer, President of Mayer Laboratories, destroyed thousands of N-9 condoms made by his company before they ceased production of their spermicidal condom and lubricant products in 2002. As workers dumped N9 condoms into a commercial shredder, Mayer demanded his competitors, Trojan, Lifestyles, and Beyond Seven stop production of condoms with spermicide to protect the health of their customers.

In a January 12th letter to their wholesale customers, UK-based Durex Condoms - the world’s largest condom maker, cited declining sales and stated they “will stop offering spermicidally lubricated condoms for sale and distribution after March 31, 2004.”

CondomDepot.com was the first major retailer to remove spermicide condoms from their shelves. CondomDepot President Kimberly Fidi said in a February 25th press release, “Too many young adults are not aware of the harmful and potentially deadly consequences of using this product. People are trading the misbelief of greater birth control reliability for an increased risk of contracting HIV.”

--more--

StopN9condoms.com Page 2

Until recently, N-9 was believed to be an effective chemical barrier against HIV and a variety of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In recent years, studies published by the Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and numerous peer-reviewed medical journals have concluded that N-9 not only does not help prevent STIs, it actually increases the risk of contracting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. One study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology found that women who use N-9 condoms are approximately 3 times more likely to contract a urinary tract infection than women who use regular condoms.

The WHO concluded in a 2001 study that condoms packaged with N-9 additives offer no more protection against pregnancy or infections than plain silicon lubricated condoms, and stated that "Since adverse effects due to the addition of N-9 to condoms cannot be excluded, such condoms should no longer be promoted."

According to Information Resources, Inc. (Nov. 30, 2003, "Impact of Nonoxynol-9 on Category Sales"), N9 condom sales represent 35% of all condoms sold in the U.S. and those sales decreased by only 2.2% in 2003. These numbers support advocates assertions that thousands of people are still buying N-9 condoms in the mistaken belief that they provide more protection than condoms without N-9.

Broome, who has been working on N9 issue for Assemblyman Koretz since 2002, is optimistic that StopN9condoms.com will have an impact. "Our goals are simple," said Broome. "Increase public awareness about the dangers of N9 condoms and stop companies like Trojan that put profits ahead of the health of their customers."

###